



Illinois Veteran News

An Update from the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs ★ September 2017

★ From the Director



At the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, American Athlete Jim Thorpe from Oklahoma faced incredible adversity. Jim Thorpe's sneakers went missing before the final event of the three-day competition. His emergency plan led him to burrow through the trash for a shoe too small and then borrow a shoe so oversized he had to stuff it for his foot to fit. Jim and his mismatched pair produced was a gold medal record winning the 1,500 meters in 4 minutes and 40.1 seconds. A record that would stand for 60 years until the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. Staring at great hardship, Jim looked at his situation and found an answer.

IDVA faced great hardship this summer with our computer network; but, like Jim Thorpe, our IT department researched the situation and worked night and day to find the answer. With the assistance and great partnership from DoIT, our IT team brought our network back up and thankfully got us all back to work! This was a tremendous lift for our IT department and to this day they are still working to not only keep the system up and running, but to improve the network as well.

I sincerely want to thank everyone in the IT department for their incredible work. I also want to thank ALL IDVA employees for continuing to serve our Illinois Heroes - despite the hardship of working through this technology transition.

No television cameras were at the 1912 Olympics to capture the grace and prowess of Jim Thorpe as he competed. Similarly, there was no fanfare as our team worked hard to find the answers that would meet all of our needs, but I'm sure you will all agree that they did amazing work that is truly worthy of a gold medal! Thank you Scott Norton, Mark Saunders, Mike Putnam, Chris Pence, Mark Berger, Brian Daugherty, Neil Holgerson, Sandy Shutt, Kay Roof, Terry Wise, and Andrew Coulter. We appreciate you!

In addition to our technology transformation, we successfully hosted not one, but TWO Veterans Days at the State Fair! Our Springfield event for the Illinois State Fair welcomed the first Medal of Honor recipient of President Trump's presidency. Mr. McCloughan delivered heartfelt remarks that punctuated a memorable Memorial Service for our Gold Star Families and a program that left the audience looking forward to what next year will bring. We had our largest parade on record and another fantastic JROTC Drill Competition! We mirrored this program this year at the DuQuoin State Fair. The city of DuQuoin has never seen a Veterans Day like the one we had this year! It was a fantastic day thanks to the leadership of Assistant Director Harry Sawyer, Chief of Staff Renysha Brown, Communications Manager Dave MacDonna, Homes Coordinator Gwen Diehl, and all of the IDVA staff who participated in the event.

Our mission at the IDVA is very simple. To serve those who have served. In doing so, we serve not only the men and women who have worn the uniform, but also their families. It is our privilege to be able to help our veterans receive the benefits they have earned through service to our nation. Our goal is to empower our veterans and their families to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

We know there are many veterans within our great state who do not require any assistance – but we still want to encourage you to "Stand Up and Be Counted!" by registering with your local VSO. In doing so, you're helping IDVA to do a better job of planning for services, seeking federal funding and understanding the needs of our veteran communities statewide. [Click here to register.](#)

We Thank you for your service and for your sacrifice and we at the IDVA look forward to offering our services to You.

Quincy



(L-R) The American Legion Post 374 & Auxiliary hosted a Father's Day Picnic for our residents & their families at the Illinois Veterans Home in Quincy on Sunday, June 18, 2017. They served chicken strips, mashed potatoes & gravy, green beans, coleslaw, rolls & pie.

Pictured is resident, Leo Deihl, with his grandson & his wife, John & Audra Reinig.

The activity staff wore their ties in honor of the Father's! Pictured from left to right, Spencer Jacobson, Activity intern, Sara Colgrove, Acting Director of Volunteer Services & Activities, Vicky Zanger & Whittany Flambeau, Activity Program Aides

LaSalle



The American Legion Auxiliary, Newark, IL has had a garage sale and raised \$1,000.00 for the LaSalle Veterans Home.

Luna Spraggon, Irene Brown, Cheri Stewart, President, Susan Scully, Director of Volunteer Services, Karen Riebel, Treasurer



Left to Right front row: Jon Adams, resident and John Busse, resident Center holding donation check: Keith Durbin, President of The Guardian Riders, Sara Colgrove, Acting Director of Volunteer Service & Activities Back row, left to right: Moses Pagan, Ed McConnell, Tanya Durbin, Julie Kosick, Shelli Mays, Donna McConnell, Verla McConnell, Dave Bobinski & Greg McConnell

The Guardian Riders from Michigan City, Indiana visited the residents on Saturday, June 10. They honored their fellow veterans with an ice cream social, offering numerous flavors like mint chocolate chip, super-duper cheesecake, butter pecan, Moose tracks, sherbet and a large selection of toppings to go with it. The residents loved it! The Guardian Riders also presented a donation of \$500 to the Veterans Home to be used for activities & various needs of the residents.

★ News from Home

Manteno

"Volunteers of America" Summer Camp for the youth Hope Manor, Joined in for a morning of bingo at the Manteno Veterans Home. What a great opportunity for the 6 counselors to get involved in giving back and volunteering. The room was filled what great fun was had by all.

Administrator Lester Robertson, Director of Social Services, Cheryl Winnicki welcomed Sanchez Thomas, Manager of Family & Youth Programming at Hope Manor, Chicago Illinois!



The John Menig Memorial Golf Outing has been long standing outing for the Manteno Home. The outing was founded by Bill Menig, a retired woodshop teacher and volunteer at the Manteno Veterans home. He created the golf outing in honor of his father, John Menig. Veterans from the home join participants for lunch prior to the event.

Bill Menig enjoying lunch with the Veterans Director of Volunteers/Activities Sue Hildebrand and John Menig Volunteers, Maggie Davis and Sandy Britt Group of the many Golfers



Veteran Tim McCauley was at the Manteno Home on a short term basis. His conditions improved and he was discharged from the home this month. Tim, a retired fire fighter was surprised with a visit and well wishes from the Manteno Fire Department the day he left our home. We wish Tim and his wife the very best!



Members from the Manteno Tri K Triathlon Club donated proceeds from this annual event. A check in the amount of \$2,500.00. (L) Julia Reich, Paul and Marianne Surprenant, President of Tri K Club, Nicole Cartier, IVHM Administrator, Lester Robertson, Acting Director of Volunteers/Activities Sue Hildebrand, Dan and Diane Gerber. We are so appreciative of the continued support and generosity from the local Tri K Triathlon club.

★ IDVA Calendar

- 9/23 Gold Star Family Weekend** – *Chicago*
9/28 AMEREN event – Director Speaking – *Decatur*
10/03 Hispanic Latino Veteran
Heritage Celebration – *Chicago*
10/09 Columbus Day – *State Office Closed*
10/28 50th Anniversary Vietnam
Veteran Program – *Anna*
11/05 Serving Those Who Serve
program runs from 11/05 – 11/11 – *statewide*
11/08 Veterans Day Program – *Springfield Rotunda*
11/10 Veterans Day – *State office Closed*

Find details about all these events and others on our Events page of our website -

<https://www.illinois.gov/veterans/about-us/events/Pages/default.aspx>

★ SECA

The State and University Employees Combined Appeal (SECA) that provides all employees the opportunity to donate to the charitable causes of their choice to enhance the quality of life for all runs from 09/13/17 through 11/08/17. Established in 1983, SECA is a workplace giving campaign that allows State Employees to donate to nearly 2,000 charities at local, state, national, and international levels. State employees have contributed more than \$76 million to help improve our environment. 100% of your contribution is sent directly to your designated charity(ies). The 12 “Charitable Federations” collectively represent nearly 2,000 charities from which to choose from when making your donation. Participation in the State and University Employees Combined Appeal is important and any gift is greatly appreciated and helps make a difference. Support of the SECA campaign demonstrates a willingness to help a single need or many needs within the community.

Thank you for your gift and understanding the impact and significance of a personal commitment through SECA. For more information go to -

<https://www.illinois.gov/seca/Pages/default.aspx>

★ New Employees



Melissa Beckford joined the IDVA team in July 2017 as a veteran service officer. Melissa currently holds a Master in Professional counseling from Grand Canyon University and Bachelor of Social Science from Troy University. She is an Army Veteran, with over 8 years total of military service both on active duty and Army Reserves. She worked as a Supply Specialist in the Army Reserves and then transition into active duty as an administrative specialist in Ft. Benning Georgia. Melissa Beckford graduated from the US Army Mental Health school at Ft Sam, Houston, TX as a Mental Health Specialist and proceeded to served overseas in Landstuhl, Germany in a MASH unit as a Mental Health Specialist, evaluating and treating combat veterans suffering from PTSD.

Among her many personal and professional achievements, Melissa served as County Veteran Service Officer for the Veterans Assistance Commission of Winnebago County, where she helped local veterans with financial assistance and facilitated their transition to a more independent living.



Kevin E. Hughes is the new veteran service officer in Quincy, starting this past July. He is retired from the US Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer, having served 22 years in Naval Aviation as an Avionics technician and maintenance department manager. After retirement,

Kevin worked government contracts at NAWC China lake. After moving to Quincy, he took a job as the Chief of Maintenance for a small contracted air services company flying foreign military aircraft in support of US Navy, Air Force and Marine ground force training schools throughout the United States. Kevin tells us he applied for this job as a Veterans Service Officer because he saw an opportunity to once again end each work day with a sense of accomplishment, knowing that he has done something to assist and serve our Veterans.



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